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ABSTRACT

This study contrasts the characteristics, preferences, and employability of graduates of cross-cultural teacher training programs with those of peers who received traditional training. It was found that: 1) a need exists for multi-culturally trained teachers; 2) such graduates are highly successful in the job market; 3) these persons tend to seek jobs where their training and experience can be well utilized; and, 4) educators and citizens in multi-cultural communities are willing to accept preservice teachers into their midst and to assist them to further develop teaching and related skills. (Author/JD)

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EMPLOYABILITY AND MULTI-CULTURAL TEACHER PREPARATION

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A paper presentation during the 1980 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Boston, Massachusetts, on April 7-11, 1980

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Employability and Multi-Cultural Teacher Preparation

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ABSTRACT

Multi-cultural teacher preparation is a clear asset in today's highly competitive job market. Few institutions, however, presently provide didactic and experiential teacher training in cross-cultural settings. This study contrasts the characteristics, preferences, and employability of graduates of such programs with those of peers trained in traditional teacher preparation curricula. Current and prospective school administrators, program developers, and teacher educators should be encouraged by findings that: 1) a need exists for multi-culturally trained teachers; 2) such graduates are highly successful in the job market; 3) these persons tend to seek jobs where their training and experience can be well utilized; and 4) educators and citizens in multi-cultural communities are willing to accept preservice teachers into their midst and to assist them to further develop teaching and relating skills.

EMPLOYABILITY AND MULTI-CULTURAL TEACHER PREPARATION

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Objectives

The broad objective of the present study was to examine data pertinent to the employability and job satisfaction of beginning teachers who participated in culturally-oriented curricula and to compare this group with a much larger group of peers prepared to teach by more traditional and typical college programs. Specific study objectives included:

1) To determine and statistically test the relative employability (i.e., rate of success in finding a teaching job) for these two groups of graduates.

2) To examine methods used by graduates to locate and obtain jobs in education.

3) To examine and compare these two groups in terms of:

   a) a variety of demographic variables possibly related to employability.
   b) their situational flexibility with regard to employment opportunities.
   c) the nature (type, size, and organizational pattern) of the teaching positions they sought.
   d) the relative success they experienced in actually obtaining the kind of employment sought.
   e) their appraisals of the value of their teacher preparation programs in light of their present employment situations.

Perspectives

There is a growing awareness both in American society at large and in the professional community of educators that cultural pluralism should be accepted and nurtured within public schools and teacher preparation institutions (Stent, Hazard, & Rivlin, 1973). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) has underscored the need for cultural and ethnic components in teacher preparation programs (Hunter, 1974). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) stated in a "standards" paper (1977) that multi-cultural instruction should be part of teacher preparation curricula. Meanwhile, professional journals, college of education placement bureaus, and employment agencies report a serious

"teacher surplus" in the 1970's. The job market for beginning elementary and secondary teachers is limited and competitive. On the other hand, Ornstein (1976) has pointed out that employment prospects are relatively brighter for certain categories of teachers: e.g., reading teachers, art teachers, special education teachers, bi-lingual and bi-cultural teachers, teachers from ethnic minority groups, etc.

To provide didactic and especially experiential multi-cultural instruction is a difficult and relatively expensive undertaking for colleges of education with existing typical teacher preparation curricula. Mahan and Boyle (1980) surveyed directors of student teaching and early experiences and report that responding directors perceive few viable, effective multi-cultural components in teacher preparation sequences on their own campuses --or elsewhere. Yet, these same directors maintain that multi-cultural instruction is needed and is much desired by employing districts. Clark (1977) has indicated that program modification and expansion, together with necessary faculty re-training or recruitment, are feasible options, at least for larger and better funded colleges of education. Before resources are diverted into such programs, however, further research is needed to identify the characteristics of students who seek out and who benefit from multi-cultural teacher preparation programs. Moreover, once such programs are established, it becomes particularly important to individual students as well as to program developers and sponsoring institutions to evaluate the success students experience as graduates competing in the national job market. Proponents of intensive multi-cultural teacher preparation experiences also desire to verify whether graduated participants do, in deed, assume teaching positions in settings culturally related to the preparation.

Data Source and Methods

The 1975-76 graduating class (N=733) of the college of education of a large mid-eastern university was the data source for the study. This class consisted of 1) 655 students who participated in a typical teacher preparation program and who student-taught in local school systems within 60 miles of campus, and 2) 78 Anglo students who volunteered to participate in special culturally-oriented programs and who student-taught in sites selected for their differences from mainstream pubic education. The cultural programs were conducted on American Indian Reservations (Navajo and Hopi), in Spanish-speaking communities on the southern borders of Texas and Arizona, in racially-mixed urban and inner-city neignborhoods, and in small rural communities. Cultural program curricular differences included didactic cultural orientation requirements on campus, interactive workshops with instructor/consultants from the appropriate cultural group, a journey to the cultural setting for 17 week student teaching and living experiences, and biweekly submission of cultural analysis reports while on site.

A comprehensive Teacher Employment Survey was developed for research purposes and administered to the entire graduating class. Data collection

proceeded in two phases approximately one year apart. Phase 1 occurred during and shortly after the completion of student teaching. Students were then asked to supply demographic data and information about their preferences for employment and about any limitations restricting their availability for work. Also during Phase 1, university supervisors were asked to rate students with regard to predicted performance, appearance, and commitment as teachers. The second phase of the study took place between September, 1976 and July, 1977. All graduates were re-surveyed by letter and/or telephone interview to obtain information about their experiences with the job market, the nature of their current employment situations, and--if they had obtained teaching jobs--the extent to which they were satisfied by these jobs and by their precursor experiences at the university.

Extensive efforts were required to achieve 100% coverage of the class during both phases of the survey. The researchers felt that a less extensive or complete sampling design and a different or less dependable survey technique would not be likely to capture the full range of differences in the population nor would the resulting information generalize well to other similar graduating classes.

Results

Separate analyses were performed with the data from graduates of the regular and the cultural programs. The large sample size of the regular group permitted much further statistical and inferential investigation of factors influencing employability than was the case for the cultural group. These findings and their implications for further development of traditional programs are reported in a previous paper (Lang & Lacefield, 1980). The present study reports comparative findings between these two groups, with emphasis on the characteristics and experiences of the culturally-prepared students.

For both groups, roughly 15% of the graduates reported that they had not yet attempted to find work in education, giving further graduate study and the intention to explore other vocations as major reasons for their situations. The culturally-prepared group had the higher percentage of students who began graduate study immediately. In each group, then, the remaining 85% sought employment as teachers. Fifty two per cent of the regular program graduates who sought such work found teaching jobs; 48% had failed to obtain educational jobs within the first year after graduation and most had accepted other employment. This depressing picture was significantly altered for the culturally prepared group: 83% of these students who sought teaching jobs found found them ($\chi^2=22.1$, $p<.001$). It is clear that multi-cultural teacher preparation programs certainly do not handicap their graduates in the job-market; rather the reverse appears true, namely that there definitely is a market for such training and experience and that graduates possessing them seem to have a distinct competitive edge.

No differences between groups were found in terms of distributions for sex, race, college major, earned minor or endorsement, use of placement bureaus, job limitations, or desired type and size of school. On the average, the cultural students were one year younger, were more interested in out-of-state employment, and more often desired employment in schools with innovative, non-traditional, internal organizations. Members of the culturally prepared group strongly tended to take teaching positions in multicultural schools or schools serving an ethnic minority population. Approximately 40% of the teaching contract obtainers from the Latino and American Indian Reservation Projects reported living and teaching in ethnic minority communities in the Southwest. The other 60% of the cultural group holding teaching contracts tended to be teaching in mid-eastern states but in schools with multi-cultural student bodies.

Once in the job market, it is interesting to note that in both groups only about 15% of those who found jobs did so in the school systems where they student-taught. Both groups reported that the primary method they used to find teaching jobs was through self-initiated inquiry (~ 45% so responded in each group). The second and third ranked methods were through college placement bureau (~ 14%) and family and personal contacts (~ 10%). Detailed descriptions of the special cultural didactic and experiential preparation were inserted in the placement files of project graduates. The cultural graduates, via the Teacher Employment Survey, reported employers to be highly impressed with their cultural preparation as described in placement files and as verbalized in employment interviews. Of the graduates who tried but failed to find teaching jobs, 64% of those trained in the regular program reported they still wanted to teach if only they could find jobs; of the smaller percentage of persons in this category in the cultural program, only 34% said they would still teach if jobs were available. Social service agency work was the most frequently mentioned alternative by this unemployed cultural sub-set.

For those who found teaching jobs, other interesting findings emerged. Both groups generally reported equally favorable appraisals of their university preparation. The members of the cultural group consistently remarked that the university should continue to provide cultural immersion field experiences despite the somewhat greater costs associated with such projects. An index was constructed to relate the types, sizes, and organizations of schools desired by students and the characteristics of the schools in which those students later found jobs. The difference between the groups--favoring the culturally prepared students--in terms of ability to obtain the desired employment situation was very impressive. Specifically, with regard to type and size of school, the odds were 2:1 for cultural students to get precisely what they wanted (vrs. 1:2 for regular students). With regard to work in traditional or non-traditional school organizations, the odds for a good match were 3:1 for the cultural group and 2:1 for the regular group. By a 1:1 margin, cultural students desired non-traditional settings versus 1:2 for regular students. Those who

wanted traditional schools got them by 9:1 versus 3:1 for regular students. Those who sought non-traditional schools found them with a chance better than 5:4 (vrs. 1:2 for regular students). These findings as a whole perhaps better reflect the selling power of multi-cultural training and experience than do the basic employability data. Not only do the culturally-prepared graduates obtain jobs but also they appear to have more opportunity to select jobs which match their personal employment preferences.

Summary and Future Concerns

Multi-cultural teacher preparation appears to be a clear asset in today's highly competitive job market. Few institutions, however, presently provide didactic and especially experiential teacher training in cross-cultural settings. This study presents rather rare data of the sort badly needed by current and prospective school administrators, program developers, and teacher educators. These persons should be encouraged by the findings that 1) a need exists for multi-culturally trained teachers, 2) that program graduates are highly successful in the job market, 3) that these graduates tend to seek jobs which allow them to utilize their training and experience more fully, and 4) that professional and lay people in ethnic minority communities are willing to accept Anglo preservice teachers into their midst and to assist them to develop classroom teaching and cultural adaptation skills.

Simultaneously, teacher trainers should be discouraged to note that the cultural project participants at this particular university represented only 11% of the total number of education majors eligible to elect intensive cultural immersion options. (This 11% figure has remained rather constant at the institution for several years.) Furthermore, by far the fewest project participants opted for the Urban experience despite the nearness of the placement city, the large number of urban schools in the nation, and the concentration of public school students in urban settings.

At least two questions emerge for future research. What distinguishes the preservice teachers (11%) who opted for the multi-cultural projects from those who did not? Standard demographic characteristics provided few answers. Are there differences between the two groups relative to adventurous spirit, risk taking proclivity, factual knowledge of ethnic and economic groups, stereotyping tendencies, childhood contacts with diverse people, liberal or conservative parents, personality characteristics, or other traits? Are the characteristics of preservice teachers opting for multi-cultural projects similar in any way to characteristics of inservice teachers judged as the most effective members of faculties of multi-cultural schools?

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